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DE RUEHDS #1063/01 1271201
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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4665
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7800
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEPADJ/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 001063

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/07/2019

TAGS: PREL PBTS MOPS KPKO ET ER SU SO

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF AMB. RICE TO ETHIOPIA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

African Union Focused on Somalia and Sudan

¶11. (C) At the African Union, we expect your principal interlocutors will be Commission Chairperson Jean Ping, Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha, and Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra. They have welcomed cooperation from international partners on peace and security issues, especially technical advice, and financial and in-kind support for AMISOM. The AU wants to strengthen AMISOM by securing more pledges of troops from AU member states, advance the political process, and mobilize further support from the international community, in particular the UN. AU also has requested the UN lift the arms embargo on Somalia's government to allow it to equip the Somali Joint Security Forces. Of concern, the relationship between the UN and the AU special envoys is failing and is becoming a major obstacle in supporting AMISOM. Despite UNSCR 1863 providing for the support to AMISOM, the UN opposes supporting the AMISOM civilian management staff. The AU reluctantly accepted to seek funds independent of the UN, but UN treatment of AU has not been well received by the AU leadership. Getting AU/UN cooperation back on track will require a clarification of each organization's roles and responsibilities, as well as short-, medium-, and long-term objectives in Somalia.

¶12. (C) On Sudan, the AU has resisted Western pressure and has argued for an Article 16 deferral of the ICC arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar El-Bashir. The AU leadership makes the case that the ICC controversy imperils both the Darfur peace process and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement because the GOS will cease cooperation with various partners. "Give peace a chance," is the AU's refrain. The AU appears to be banking on its High-Level Panel on Darfur to bring about change in Sudan, but you will want to inquire with the AU leadership about whether they actually believe that the GOS will implement the Panel's eventual recommendations. If the AU fails in this regard, we would expect most member states will regroup and the AU will resume its search for justice in Darfur by some other means. Whether the AU is as cohesive then as it is now remains to be seen.

¶13. (C) The humanitarian consequences of the GOS decision to expel several NGOs from Darfur are of great concern to the AU leadership. In March, when AU Chairperson Jean Ping received representatives from humanitarian assistance organizations, such as Save the Children, he reportedly said he was preoccupied by the gaps in humanitarian service delivery. The AU leadership should be able to brief you on what the AU has done concretely to address the expulsion of

NGOs.

AU Standing Against Coup d'Etat

¶4. (C) The AU leadership has also welcomed international endorsement of the AU's principled stand against coups d'etat. There are now international contact groups for Mauritania, Guinea, and Madagascar, but AU officials and the partners realize that our collective call for restoring constitutional order in these countries may only be respected when sanctions with a truly international character are adopted (i.e. UNSC-approved).

Meles Seeking International Support for the TFG/Somalia

¶5. (C) Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles believes that the international community is not doing enough to support the fledgling Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and he will most likely press for increased support. Meles is highly supportive of a UN peacekeeping mission for Somalia, and he believes that Washington waited too long to support such a mission. Meles will certainly press for your current view of the UN's future role in Somalia. Although Meles has little faith that the TFG under President Sheikh Sharif will succeed, Meles is cautiously supporting the TFG and trying to avoid directly undermining the government. Ethiopian troops completely withdrew from Somalia in February 2009, but the Ethiopian government is providing intelligence and military support to Somali groups committed to fighting al-Shabaab including the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA), and Al Sunnah Wal Jamah (ASWJ).

Meles Opposed to ICC Indictment Against Bashir

¶6. (C) Meles is opposed to the ICC indictment against Bashir because he believes that it will fuel instability in Sudan by weakening the regime, an issue that he may raise with you. Meles may also fear that the indictment sets a precedent that opens the door for similar action against himself arising from allegations of Ethiopian ethnic cleansing against its Somali population. Ethiopia is not a signatory to the Rome Statute and the Ethiopian government has publicly declared that they will not act on the ICC warrant. Meles and Bashir last met during the week of April 19 when Bashir visited Addis Ababa as part of a bilateral dialogue. Meles views stability in Sudan to be critical for Ethiopia's national security, and he fears that the side-effects from renewed civil war in Sudan will spill into Ethiopia as a result of a collapse of the CPA. As Meles will tell you, Ethiopia is the only country to border both north and south Sudan, putting Ethiopia in the position of having to balance direct relationships with both Khartoum and Juba. Meles has friendly relationships with Bashir and Salva Kiir, but is personally closer to Bashir to whom he speaks on a regular basis. Because Eritrean President Isaias has a demonstrated record of negatively intervening in regional dynamics to undermine Ethiopia's position, Meles prefers to play a very quiet, behind-the-scenes role on Sudan.

Meles Comfortable with Status Quo on Eritrean Border

¶7. (C) Meles appears content to allow the status quo with Eritrea continue with no resolution of the border impasse, and he would not welcome any new attempt by the UNSC to engage on this issue. For Meles, the Algiers Agreements and the EEBC decision are "dead," having expired when President Isaias ejected UNMEE from Eritrea in 2008. He is disappointed that the UNSC did not take action against Asmara over its unprecedented expulsion of the UN peacekeeping force. Meles has repeatedly told U.S. officials that the issue can be revisited when there is a new government in Asmara, possibly under a new mechanism to demarcate the border. He believes that he "can wait Isaias out," and that sooner or later, the Eritrean people will rise up and depose

Isaias.

Meles Looking for UNSC Action Regarding ER-DJ Border

¶8. (C) Meles believes that the UNSC has not adequately punished Isaias over his actions regarding the Eritrea-Djibouti border issue. Both Meles and the AU are supportive of UNSCR 1862, but both are opposed to any attempt by the UNSC to link resolution of the ER-DJ border issue to the ET-ER border impasse.

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